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power and wealth commanded his respect. The practical Roman turned with disdain from the subtle half-prophetic speculations of the Greek, and remembered that a well-to-do centurion could buy up a hundred apostles of philosophy. But wisdom was justified of her children. It was the quickening influence of Greek ideas that enabled the Roman government to adapt itself to the rule of the world.

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## SOCIAL LIFE AND MORALITY IN INDIA.

I OFFER no apology for discussing this subject, as all thinking minds in the West take a very deep interest in the social and moral life of Eastern peoples.

During my sojourn in England it has struck me that the people here know either too much or too little of us,—too much because the Anglo-Indians (officials and missionaries) pretend to know everything about our people, often more than we know ourselves; too little, because those Englishmen who have not been over to India are deplorably ignorant of us. I say deplorably, because I think it is only right that the British people should have a correct idea of the various races with which they have to deal politically as well as commercially.

I have lived in England for over five years, and during this period I have had ample occasion to see something of English social life. It has deeply interested me, and I dare say it may be interesting to the readers of this JOURNAL if I tell them about our Indian social life in my own way. I do not propose to dwell upon the various creeds of the Indian people; but our religions are so vitally blended with our social customs as well as with our moral code that I may be obliged to refer to them now and then. I wish to give as faithful a picture of our life as I can, with all its fine as well as its faulty points. I am

as willing to acknowledge our defects as I am anxious to have our virtues recognized and rightly appreciated.

No people are entirely virtuous, and none are entirely vicious; and though we all agree upon the common and principal virtues and vices, yet there are some with regard to which our standards differ a great deal, thus giving rise to certain differences in moral practice and social customs. Differences in methods of life determine many of the different social circumstances, and religious laws also account for many of them. Lastly, poverty, climate, and other similar causes have their due share of influence.

There are two principal communities in India, the Hindoos and the Moslems, with their respective religions. The Jains are socially the same as the Hindoos. The Parsees, though an influential community, are few in number and too exclusive to influence or be influenced by the rest of India. The Christians are too insignificant in number to be mentioned.

Those Englishmen who know anything at all about us do not deny that our moral and religious code of laws enjoins the ordinary virtues acknowledged by mankind. Lying, backbiting, hypocrisy, dishonesty, and selfishness are as strongly condemned by Islam and Hindooism as they are by Christianity. On the other hand, truthfulness, honesty, charity, and benevolence are urged with equal force. The difference is not so much in theory as it is in practice, and this I hope to show in the course of this brief article.

The first and most important question is as to the condition of women, which directly or indirectly includes many other social problems. The following are the different phases from which we can best study the question.

(1) Their freedom. The common impression in England is that our women are always kept secluded within the four walls of our houses, by what is known as the *pardah* system. This impression is, I believe, enormously exaggerated. It must be noted that the majority of Indians are extremely poor, and the women of that class (as Lady Dufferin has rightly pointed out), who form more than ninety per cent. of the whole female population of India, have no *pardah* system at

all. They walk about in the streets and go about at their business as the women of England do. They do not even wear the gauze veil worn by European ladies. It is only among the wealthier classes, whose number is very small, that the system at all obtains; and with them the *pardah* (or veiling) is of three degrees. First, the veil is only a fold of the scarf that hangs over the head covering the forehead, one end of it being drawn across the lower part of the face. Women with this partial veil go about as others do. The next is a complete veil, *burkah*, covering the entire person, with a cap fitting tightly on the head and two gauze squares in front of the eyes. The third is the real seclusion in the house. This is only practised among the chiefs and the nobility, while the second kind is used among the rigidly orthodox and the clergy and exists also among the Hindoos, but not so much as among the Moslems. From this it is evident that the percentage of women who are strictly secluded is very small.

The effect of this seclusion is quite as much exaggerated as its extent. Its injurious influence upon the physique is limited to very few women. Therefore, after all, it is not quite so bad as it is the fashion to represent, although we might be better off without it.

(2) Far worse than any *pardah* is the practical exclusion of women from what is known in this country as "society." It is true that with the Parsees and some educated Bengaleese women enjoy more and freer social intercourse, but these communities are limited in number as well as in locality. Their influence, therefore, is local and is not felt by the masses. In reality we are practically without any national social gatherings. We have, however, on festive occasions many meetings of a more or less social nature, which are not solely confined to men. Women adorn them with their presence and make them more enjoyable with their songs and conversation. On marriage occasions the gayety of these meetings is commensurate with the solemnity of the ceremony, the old vying with the young in enjoyment. This is more general among the Hindoos, for they even make their religious ceremonies occasions for festivity. The absurdities that take place at such

times in the way of fun and frolic altogether outdo what is usual at any other time. But however gay and free such gatherings are, they lack the high educative element which distinguishes the social gatherings in England.

The effect of this exclusive system is certainly more permanent and more deplorable than the *pardah*, and brings all Indian reformers face to face with a problem of vital importance and immense difficulty. The difficulty is twofold: on the one hand, they have to eradicate chronic and deep-rooted customs and prejudices; and, on the other, they are afraid of introducing a custom which along with blessings is liable to engender vices that would make freedom more degrading than elevating.

One cannot help noticing the great harm which this want of freer intercourse between men and women does to our country, in keeping our women in comparative illiteracy and ignorance. At the present time when India is producing young men educated in Western thought and life, she fails to produce women who would be their fit helpmeets and companions. Hence it gives rise to discontent, which (although it may bear fruit later on) is at present ineffective and harmful.

(3) Another thing that should be noticed is the existence of many proverbs derogatory to the fair sex. These proverbs work havoc in the minds of the masses, whose philosophy and education are limited to what they inherit from their parents. For instance, "woman is like a slipper made to order; wear it if it fits you, throw it away if it does not;" "you can never be safe from the cunning artifices of woman;" "woman is like a snake, charming as well as venomous," and so on. Now, one can imagine the pernicious effect of these proverbs when they form the principal part of a man's knowledge and education as regards women.

(4) I should now like to pass to a problem of more serious import, and one upon which opinions largely differ. I mean marriage,\* which includes early marriage, polygamy, and divorce.

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\* The seriousness of this question depends on the fact that it is regulated by religious laws alone.

The word "early" as applied to marriage is rather elastic. In England it means any period between sixteen and twenty; whilst as applied to our communities it means any period from infancy up to the age of seventeen. Of course there are some marriages in India that take place at as early an age as eight or ten; but usually these, as well as earlier ceremonies, are merely betrothals. The Hindoos and the Moslems differ vastly in this custom as they do in other laws of marriage. The Moslem law practically excludes marriages before maturity; even betrothal is left to the marrying couple unless one or both happen to be orphans under guardianship. If their marriage or betrothal takes place before their maturity, it is abrogated at their option when they are of age. Among the Hindoos, marriage being a sacrament rather than a contract, and even more strict than it is in Christianity, it cannot be abrogated when once the ceremony is performed, whether the married couple are infants in arms or intelligent beings endowed with discretion.

Early marriages are, however, practised among the Moslems in defiance of their law. And when it is remembered that about ninety per cent. of Indian Moslems are of pure Hindoo blood, one cannot be surprised at this strange phenomenon, as the tenacity with which we Indians adhere to our old usages and customs surpasses even our reverence for our religious laws.

Early marriage among the Hindoos is principally practised by the middle trading-classes; and as they are very sedentary in their habits and live on scanty, ill-nourishing fare, it not only makes them puny and wretched, but enervates and dispirits them, and thus renders them unfit as a people. Among the Moslems it exists chiefly in village communities where healthy avocations counteract the physical mischiefs. Its inroads upon the morals of the people are also more marked in the Hindoo community. It debases marriage to a mere matter of necessity, and as it arises principally (or rather solely) from the parents' desire of seeing their children happily settled in their own lifetime, it sets parents scheming and planning; and not seldom they abuse their privilege and make

marriage a mere monetary affair. I know of a good many marriages among respectable Hindoo families where several thousand rupees changed hands as a price, so to speak, for the bride. This state of affairs is of course hopelessly low and debasing. I am glad to say that the Moslems are practically free from this usage, which is no doubt the result of the supremely practical nature of the teachings of Islam.

I might incidentally refer to an argument that is often brought forward by my countrymen in support of early marriages,—namely, that it prevents the youth from being led astray. Theoretically this appears to be correct, but practically I believe it is the parent of worse vices than would otherwise be produced.

The next problem in connection with marriage that we have to consider is polygamy. Polygamy though apparently more objectionable is not in my opinion fraught with such dangers and serious consequences as those resulting from early marriages. It is practised both among the Moslems and the Hindoos, but more among the former; it is not so commonly practised as people in this country imagine. Yet it is extensive and proportionately injurious, because it is often indulged in in defiance of the law on the subject. The chiefs and the nobility, whether Hindoo or Moslem, indulge in it almost indiscriminately, and they, as a rule, consult their convenience and desires rather than the principles of their respective religions. They certainly set a very bad example, but happily their practice is not approved of by other classes of the community. The really injurious influence of polygamy comes into play when the middle classes and the masses indulge in it; for in nine cases out of ten they, too, would set aside the teachings of religion and follow their own whims and desires. Not infrequently the parents are to blame, as the marriage which was arranged by them has perhaps turned out unhappily. One thing I must remark to the credit of our people: a polygamist is never much respected by them. This shows that they have an inherent repugnance for the injustice of the practice.

Although I have denounced polygamy as it is practised, I do not by any means condemn the law as it is embodied in

the teachings of Mohammed; for I am thoroughly convinced that the law, if rightly carried out, is an efficient antidote to certain evils which are abundantly found in monogamous communities, and which with all the forces of civilization at their command they have failed to eradicate. There are many instances where polygamy has led to beneficial results. And, on the whole, I am not quite sure which of the two is less harmful to humanity,—a man marrying one woman and keeping one or more in defiance of his law and religion, or a man marrying two women in accordance with his law and his religion. In the one case the woman is degraded and the man is debased; in the other the woman is elevated to the proud station of a wife and the man is saved from sin and self-debasement. In the one case woman is a mere toy of man's fancy and caprice, and can at any moment be cast on the world, despised and abandoned; in the other she has a lawful protector and leads a good life, respected and respectable.

The Christian law is, that if a man is unfaithful to his marriage vows the marriage tie is broken. Thus in Christian countries the wife is degraded by being brought down to the level of a mistress. She is to be pitied, as she often has to continue that life, partly for the sake of her children and partly to evade the scandal of publicity. It appears very uncharitable on my part to indict a Christian people, but it is not the fault of Christianity if the people do not practise its teachings. There are, no doubt, men and women in England whose lives are models of conjugal felicity and self-denial. Yet there are not a few unfortunate women who with all the appearance of respectability are in reality deceived and deceiving.

While thus pointing out the abuses of monogamy, I do not ignore the abuses of polygamy. Nor do I uphold the view that the abuse of a system is no argument against the system itself, for I am thoroughly convinced that there must be some inherent weakness which leads to its abuse, the extent of which is proportionate to the weakness of the system itself. Monogamy is weak, inasmuch as it does not provide for certain cases where, by reason of unexpected contingencies



it becomes absolutely essential to withhold marital relations, while polygamy in providing for such cases is open to the weakness of abuse. When treating social subjects we should not gloss over facts. Unpleasant as they are, they must be faced and clearly realized. No one in European communities would be so blind as wilfully to ignore the manifold evils with which these communities are permeated despite their Christianity. Polygamist communities with all their abuses are comparatively free from such far-reaching evils, as their abuse is more on the side of virtue than on the side of vice. The virtual protection that polygamy offers to women (even when it is abused) saves our people from those pests of society whose only function is to pander to the passions of faithless husbands, to tempt those whose purity is yet unsullied, and to be a fatal rock for wavering chastity and an inexhaustible source of physical afflictions, whose havocs are not confined to the victim alone but carried down to his innocent progeny.

With regard to the causes that lead to the abuse of polygamy, it must be noticed that they principally arise from want of education and from ignorance of religion. With the advancement and diffusion of education and the widening of knowledge, our people will put a stop to early marriages, and woman will be a more prominent factor in the development of social life and no longer ignorant of her surroundings as she now is. And these changes, by revolutionizing our social conceptions, will effectively prevent the abuses of polygamy.

Another charge which is made against our community is the "facility for divorce." I cannot understand how people who know anything of our life can make such a statement with impunity. Among the Hindoos divorce has no existence. Once they are united they are united forever. It is the Moslems who are blamed, for it is said that they can divorce and marry wives innumerable. Such allegations can only arise from ignorance and prejudice. The Moslem law of divorce is peculiarly interesting from an ethical point of view and has a double fascination about it. It is as stringent as it is elastic, yet its elasticity adds to its stringency. Mohammed

distinctly and repeatedly said, "God hates nothing more than divorce, and he loves nothing more than the freeing of a slave." Can there be anything stronger than this dictum? The other aspect of our law is that it allows three distinct periods of separation before divorce actually takes place. In each of these periods the divorcing parties are enjoined to think deliberately over their differences, so that they may maintain rather than break the sacred tie that unites them. As these periods extend to three months, ample time and opportunities are given for the final decision. This clearly implies an intention of keeping the marriage tie unbroken as long as possible. Besides, it has the advantage of adaptability, which is entirely wanting in the Christian system of divorce. A wife can divorce her husband on the same grounds on which the husband can divorce his wife. Thus it is manifest that the very elasticity of this law makes it more binding.

With regard to the practice of divorce, it is not at all so common among us, and here I speak of the Indian Moslem alone. Among the orthodox, divorce always takes the form I have described above, though many do not take advantage of the triple period allowed. However, as soon as divorce is settled between them, they complete it by a declaration to that effect repeated three times. Considering, therefore, that divorce is rare among the Hindoos, and not common among the Moslems, and that the latter form only one-fifth of the whole population, our percentage of divorce cases must fall far below that of England.

Another subject to which I should like to refer is that of "widow marriage." This solely concerns the Hindoo community. In reality, the notion that widows should not remarry originates from the very highest ideal of love as expounded in Hindoo theology; but, like many other high ideals, its fascination is the mere fascination of form.

The originators of such ideals who embody them in law fail to consider their practical aspect, and thus the ideal remains unattained and unattainable. It is certainly hard to think that a young girl who has lost her husband even before she attains the age of maturity should be doomed to a life of

loveless solitude. The respect and kind treatment which are accorded to her by relatives and friends cannot compensate for the cruel repression of her natural love. Yet I do not think that practically this system has any very injurious effect upon the Hindoo community, apart from the hard life of the girl herself. There is, however, a movement on foot to introduce the remarriage of widows, and I sincerely hope it will meet with favor by the general community.

(5) Another important characteristic of the Indian people is the system of caste. This, too, is vastly misunderstood by the people here in England. I have often been asked, "How does the caste system work among the Moslems?" Now, I must make it clear that there is absolutely nothing like caste among the Moslems. Islam is the greatest leveller of caste distinctions and class differences. The influence of Islam in this respect is simply marvellous. We Indian Moslems, though we adhere persistently to our ancient Hindoo customs, at once give up all idea of caste on embracing the faith of Islam. Go to a Moslem community in Africa or in India, and you will find the workingman and the ruling monarch praying before God shoulder to shoulder without the slightest distinction of rank. This is not a mere matter of theory; it is in practice everywhere among us.

Caste in India, therefore, is confined to the Hindoos, and there, strange to say, in spite of its apparent defectiveness, it does not work so badly as people here imagine. After all, it is nothing but a determination of social differences to which every human community is naturally subject. The problem of labor and other social problems in Europe and America, which the best intellects of modern times are trying their best to solve, are, in a way, the same difficulties that led to the origination of the caste system among the Hindoos. It is true that it is rigid, and that it is almost impossible for a person of the lowest class to rise to the highest. Yet it is self-evident that there must exist even in Utopia itself "hewers of wood and drawers of water." No occupation that contributes to the development of society is ignoble. In Western countries, where people boast of their equality, I have observed that the

gulf between the classes is wider than that between castes in India. Of course it is possible for a person of the lowest class here to rise to the upper grade of society. Yet the practical lack of intercourse and fellow-feeling between the upper and lower classes makes equality more or less a farce.

The degradation and misery of the laboring classes here is ten times worse than the poverty and humble occupation of the low-class Hindoos, for the latter are not shunned by the upper-caste Hindoos. Mere expressions of philanthropy on the platform and in the press do not bridge over real class differences. We are not quite so profuse in our professions of sympathy, but we are equally zealous in doing all that can be done to ameliorate the condition of our laboring classes. Amelioration does not necessarily mean that a low-class person should rise to a higher stratum of society. It really means making a man a better citizen, better fitted for the social function which he has to perform. With this conception of real social advancement, one cannot help being struck with the fact that the low-class Hindoos are better fitted for their station in life and for the performance of their duties than are the lower classes of the West. Another remarkable feature of their life is their practical godliness. Whether Hindoo or Moslem, they are firm in their respective faiths, and carry them out so far as their circumstances and understanding allows them. In contrast with this, we find the lower classes, in England particularly, wanting in the spirit of religion. One has only to walk through the by-ways and slums of London to see the beastly traits of man in their typical form.

The busy surroundings of the poor in the Western countries, their hard struggle for existence, and their wants doubly multiplied by civilization, cannot permanently influence them for good. On the contrary, they are calculated to engender greed, selfishness, discontent, and a host of evils that make life wretched. It may be that I share the usual partiality which every man entertains towards the institutions of his native country. Yet I cannot help noticing the simple, contented lives of our poor people, whose wants are few and easily sup-

plied, and who, therefore, are comparatively free from the worldliness and callousness of the West.

One especially redeeming feature is the almost entire exclusion of alcoholic beverages. As people in this country well know, Moslems are total abstainers, and the Hindoos are not much in love with "the daughter of the grape." There are very few of them who drink at all, and they are usually temperate. I mention this fact to point out that those vices which are directly traceable to alcohol are not found among us. I have heard people here in England remark that what wine is to a Frenchman or whiskey to an Irishman, opium is to a Chinaman or to an Indian, I do not uphold the use of opium in India; but, although it has a very enervating and demoralizing effect upon the system, it does not excite to violence and madness. Its evils are more passive and more confined to the victim of the narcotic than are those of alcohol.

In conclusion, let me say a few words about our home life, as home life illustrates the character of a people even more than their public institutions. The home life in this country is represented by the members of the family sitting round the fireplace on a cold winter evening, when perhaps it is snowing hard outside. With us the idea of home life is to derive happiness and comfort from the warmth of genuine affection which unites the family. We have the most profound reverence for our elders, and the unity of the family is much stronger than in European homes. Brothers permanently live under the same roof till the end of their days; and, even if their vocations should necessitate their separation, they always return to the parental roof as their only home. Perhaps it does not bring out the quality of self-help to the fullest extent, yet it nurtures self-sacrifice and consideration for others.

A similar feeling binds us to our remoter relatives, and we look upon it as a duty to help them in distress. I need hardly refer to the fidelity which characterizes our friendships, in spite of what is said of the treacherousness of our character. This is equally true of Hindoos and Moslems.

Our hospitality is simply proverbial. A man can travel

from one part of the country to another, sure of food and shelter according to his needs. In England I have known young sons living with their parents and paying for their meals, a state of affairs repugnant to our feelings and altogether unknown among us.

Our society is essentially different from that of the West. We lack its merits, and, fortunately, we are also free from its vices. I have already referred to the freedom of social intercourse in England. The custom of dancing in low-necked dresses, for instance, is foreign to our community and inconsistent with our notions of modesty. If our people knew of the little *tête-à-tête* chats that take place behind the screen, they would be shocked at the lightness of conduct which this freedom leads to. Flirtation is another apparently harmless feature of English society. It is very pleasant, indeed, but is fraught with grave dangers. Flirtation always appears to me like alcohol. A small dose will lead to a larger one, and then its effects begin to tell on the unguarded youth who is rash enough to play with fire. I say this from no spirit of levity. I would like to put this honest and straightforward question to English parents, Do such things exist among you or not, and, if they do, are they really conducive to your moral welfare?

One feature of our modern society in India I cannot help mentioning,—namely, an attempt on the part of our young reformers to introduce the free customs of the West in an extensive way. They go out with their wives for walks, and thus offend the susceptibilities of those whom they wish to follow them. Their endeavors are misdirected, and they are doomed to failure. As they generally carry with them from England drinking and other evil habits, and ape the Anglo-Indian in not associating with their poor countrymen, they are by no means models to be imitated.

My last word will be to repudiate the idea that we do not respect our women. Our respect for woman is profounder than that which I have noticed in England. We make no show of our respect for them. At home or abroad we treat them the same way. Their backward condition arises from our igno-

rance, and not from our disrespect for them. Of course among the masses woman is looked upon pretty nearly in the same way as she is here, but among the better classes she sways the home. Is it possible that, in a society which is known to have been civilized from very old times, woman could be disrespected? Can a son disrespect his mother? If not, how can we Hindoos and Moslems be thought to be guilty of such an atrocious offence against humanity?

MUHAMMAD ABDUL GHANI.

LONDON.

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## THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

THE struggle between the mechanical and spiritual views of the universe, carried on in one guise or another since men first became capable of coherent thought, is not now, and perhaps in the very nature of things can never be, definitely settled. It is, however, not less important here than elsewhere that the contestants should not be encumbered by their baggage. To save the main position, moreover, is more necessary than to keep possession of the outposts. Unfortunately, it has been left for philosophy to make an unpartisan stand for the spiritual interpretation of life. Too often religion, whose existence is staked on the same conflict, has contented itself with watching narrowly some special point which would soon prove untenable and worthless if the main battle went against it.

I propose now to consider religious education in the broadest light as an educational and philosophical, not a theological question. I regard the wakening and cultivation of the religious spirit as the important task, the critical task, and, alas, the neglected task. I shall not attempt, therefore, to outline a policy immediately applicable to any specific conditions. I shall not even consider the question of supplementing or modifying my argument or conclusion so as to adapt either or both to the requirements of any particular form of religious belief or worship. As far as practicable, I shall ignore racial